

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 SCS-03

SCA-01 PC-01 AID-05 SY-05 /076 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASH DC NIACT IMMEDIATE 810

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EINV PINT ET

SUBJECT: SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS FACE INCREASING PROBLEMS IN
TETHIOPIA

REF : ADDIS ABABA 9949 AND PREVIOUS

1. CHARGE MET SEPT 6 WITH LOCAL SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST (SDA)
REPS TO DISCUSS SDA SITUATION WHICH HAD TURNED SOUR FOLLOWING COURT
APPEARANCE ON SEPT 3 IN CONNECTION WITH DISPUTE OVER SEVERANCE AND
COMPENSATION PAY FOR WORKER AT FORMER SDA HOSPITAL (SEE PARA 3 REFTEL).

ACCORDING TO SDA OFFICIALS, WHILE THE JUDGE HAD RECEIVED COPIES OF
LETTERS FROM OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND MINISTRY OF
HEALTH OUTLINING THE AGREEMENT REPORTED REFTEL WHEREBY SUM
OF ETH \$376,000 WHICH SDA HAD ACCEPTED AS BEING DUE TO MEET
SEVERANCE AND COMPENSATION CLAIMS OF HOSPITAL WORKERS WOULD BE
DEDUCTED FRO SDA ACCOUNTS OUTSTANDING AND FROM THE ASSETS OF THE
HOSPITAL, HE CHOSE TO DISREGARD THE LETTERS, AND RULED THAT THE
FULL AMOUNT OF ETH \$376,000 HAD TO BE PAID IN CASH BY SEPT 10
OR FOUR SDA OFFICIALS WOULD BE ARRESTED.

THE FOUR ARE BEKELE HEYE (LOCAL SDA CHURCH PRESIDENT), DR JESSE HOLM
(US CITIZEN HEAD SURGEON AT SDA HOSPITAL). MR. ALIMONTE

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(FILIPINO CITIZEN HOSPITAL DIRECTOR), AND SDA'S ETHIOPIAN LAWYER.

EARLIER , WHEN INFORMED OF THE ARREST THREAT ON SEPT 3, CHARGE IMMEDIATELY TELEPHONED THE DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN DIVISION, MOFA, TO INFORM HIM AND EXPRESS EMBASSY'S CONCERN, SAYING HE COULD NOT SEE HOW ARRESTS COULD HELP RESOLVE THIS CASE. HE REQUESTED MOFA TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER URGENTLY.

2. FOLLOWING THE COURT APPEARANCE, BEKELE HEYE CONTACTED COL. TEKA TULU, CHAIRMAN OF PMAC SECURITY COMMITTEE, THROUGH WHOM THE ORIGINAL AGREEMENT FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE ETH \$376,000 HAD BEEN REACHED COL. TEKA WAS UPSET THAT HIS INSTRUCTIONS HAD NOT BEEN FOLLOWED AND INSTRUCTED BEKELE HEYE TO CONTACT MINISTRIES OF LABOR AND HEALTH TO HAVE THEM STRAIGHTEN OUT THE MATTER WITH THE COURT. THUS FAR, BEKELE HAS RECEIVED "RUN-AROUND" FROM THE MINISTRIES AND HE IS NOT OPTIMISTIC

THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE SITUATION BY FRIDAY, SEPT 10, WITHOUT DIRECT PMAC INTERVENTION WHICH IS PROBLEMATIC.

3. BEKELE NONETHELESS INTENDS TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH MINISTRIES OF LABOR AND HEALTH TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE PROBLEMS BEFORE THE SEPT 10 DEADLINE (AND WE HAVE URGED HIM TO DO SO). IN ADDITION, HE IS ATTEMPTING

TO GET BACK IN TOUCH WITH COL. TEKA WHO, WE UNDERSTAND, IS A DISTANT RELATIVE OF BEKELE. THE LOCAL SDA OFFICIALS HAVE NOT DECIDED ON A STRATEGY SHOULD THEY FAIL IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS THIS WEEK. ALL OF THEIR LOCAL BANK ACCOUNTS HAVE BEEN BLOCKED BY THE JUDGE IN THE LABOR CASE, INCLUDING NOW THE SDA'S CHURCH ACCOUNT WHICH GOES TO PAY THE SALARIES OF THEIR MINISTERS AND OTHER EXPENSES OF THE RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES. LOCAL SDA GROUP DOES NOT HAVE NEARLY SUFFICIENT MONEY TO PAY ETHIOPIAN DOLS 376,000 IN QUESTION.

4. LOCAL SDA OFFICIALS SAID THEY HAVE NOT YET INFORMED THEIR HEADQUARTERS IN THE U.S. BUT PROMISED AT OUR URGING TO DO SO TODAY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT MR. CHARLES WATSON, VICE-PRESIDENT OF AFRO-MIDEAST DIVISION OF SDA, WHO IS ENTIRELY FAMILIAR WITH CASE, IS CURRENTLY AT SDA WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS FOR CONSULTATIONS. ASKED WHETHER THEY HAD APPEALED DECISION OF SEPT 3, BEKELE ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY, BUT SAID SUPERIOR COURTS HAD REFUSED TO ORDER A STAY OF

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EXECUTION.

5. FOR DEPT'S INFO, DR. FLAIZ AND DR. HOLM HAVE BEEN CALLING ON EMBASSY TO "USE OUR INFLUENCE" WITH THE EPMG TO FORCE THEM TO CEASE HARASSMENT OF THE SDA. SPECIFICALLY, SDA DOCTORS HAVE BEEN ASKING US TO THREATEN TO CUT OFF SUPPLIES OF ASSISTANCE, MILITARY AND OTHER, UNLESS THE CASE IS SETTLED AS HAD BEEN AGREED TO DURING MR. WATSON'S VISIT. CHARGE HAS ATTEMPTED TO EXPLAIN TO FLAIZ AND HOLM THE LIMITS

OF OUR INTERVENTION IN ETHIOPIAN COURT SYSTEM, BUT THE DOCTORS
CONTINUE TO URGE US TO TAKE STRONG ACTION ON THEIR BEHALF. FLAIZ,
WHO IS LEAVING FOR THE STATES SEPT 8, HAS INFORMED US HE WILL
BRING THE MATTER
TO ATTENTION OF SEN. PACKWOOD. HOLM SAYS HE IS WILLING TO SPEND
"NIGHT OR TWO" IN JAIL IF THIS WILL MOVE HIS "GOVERNMENT TO DO
SOMETHING."

6. WE WILL CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS THIS WEEK TO TRY TO INSURE THAT
HOLM IS NOT ARRESTED, AND AS INDICATED, WE HAVE URGED SDA HERE TO
CONTINUE EFFORTS TO RESOLVE MATTER AMICABLY WITH EPMG OFFICIALS.
WE SHALL ALSO PROTEST LOOSE TALK BY CERTAIN MEMBERS OF PMAC SOCIAL
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE THAT BOTH ETHIOPIAN AND EXPATRIATE STAFF OF SDA AR
SOMEHOW CONNECTED WITH CIA AND WORKING AGAINST THE DIRG AS REPORTED
TO US BY BEKELE. WHAT IS NEEDED AT THIS POINT IS URGENT DECISION
FROM SDA HEADQUARTERS AS TO HOW THEY WANT TO PLAY IT AT THIS POINT,
SPECIFICALLY WHETHER THEY WANT TO PAY THE ETHIOPIAN DOLS 376,000
BY ARRANGING FOR AN IMMEDIATE BANK TRANSFER OR SOME OTHER WAY, OR
ATTEMPT TO GET THEIR EARLIER ARRANGEMENT BACK ON TRACK.

7. THUS FAR, AS DEPT AWARE, SDA HAS NOT FORMALLY REQUESTED US TO
INTERVENE. LOCAL REPS KEEP ASKING US VAGUELY TO "DO SOMETHING"
AS PER PARA FIVE ABOVE, BUT WITHOUT SOME SOLID INDICATION FROM SDA
HEADQUARTERS OF WHAT SDA WANTS, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION SDA'S FUTURE

PRESENCE AND INTENTIONS IN EHTIOPIA, WE ARE RELUCTANT TO GET OUT IN
FRONT. LOCAL REPS CALL COURT'S INSISTENCE ON CASH PAYMENT WHEN
BLOCKED FUNDS COULD BE USED AS "BLACKMAIL" AND WHEN PINNED DOWN, IT
SEEMS TO BE THIS ASPECT THAT FLAIZ WANTS US TO "USE OUR INFLUENCE"
TO PREVENT. WHILE WE WOULD PREFER NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN TACTICS AND
DETAILS OF CASE, WE ARE WILLING TO RAISE MATTER WITH ETHIOPIANS
ON URGENT BASIS IF INSTRUCTED TO DO SO BY DEPT. BEFORE INSTRUCTING
US, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE DEPT AND SDA WASHINGTON SHOULD BE IN ACCORD
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ON MATTER.

8. ACTION REQUESTED -- DEPT INFORM DSA URGENTLY OF LATEST DEVELOP-
MENT AND DETERMINE WHAT IF ANYTHING FURTHER WE WHOULD DO FOLLOWING
CONSULTATION WITH SDA WASHINGTON. IN MEANTIME WE SHALL CONTINUE OUR
REPRESENTATIONS TO TRY TO PREVENT THE THREATENED ARRESTS. FOR
DEPT'S INFO, ISSUE OF SEVERANCE PAY AND COMPENSATION FOR HOSPITAL
LABOR FORCE HAS PROBABLY ARISEN AT BAD TIME. WITH REVOLUTION DAY
JUST AROUND CORNER, IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT NOT MANY EPMG
OFFICIALS WHETHER OF COURTS OR EXECUTIVE BRANCH WILL WANT TO BUCK
DEMANDS FROM LABOR JUST WHEN EPMG IS LOOKING FOR MAXIMUM
SUPPORT FOR UNITY AND HARMONY ON SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE
REVOLUTION.

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